

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6205

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUALA LUMPUR 0534

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR MARR MY AU

SUBJ: WHITLAM VISIT TO MALAYSIA

1. SUMMARY. IN CALL ON AUSTRALIA HICOM PARSONS THIS WEEK FOR REVIEW OF WHITLAM VISIT, DCM WAS TOLD IT ALL WENT VERY WELL FROM GOA VIEWPOINT. MAJOR OSTENSIBLE AUSTRALIAN EFFORT WAS TO ESTABLISH IDENTITY OF INTERESTS BETWEEN GOA AND GOM. MALAYSIANS AGREED THEY HELD SAME VIEW ON "MOST" ISSUES; THE PRINCIPAL DIFFERENCE BEING THE DESIRABILITY OF A WIDER ASIAN INSTITUTIONAL GROUPING. STRAITS TIMES EDITORIAL TODAY SAID WHITLAM HAS NEVER STOOD TALLER IN MALAYSIA AND GOODWILL TOWARDS AUSTRALIA HAS NEVER BEEN ON SOUNDER BASIS. END SUMMARY.

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2. PARSONS CONFIRMED THAT MALAYSIA WAS FIRST STOP

ON THIS ITINERARY BY CAREFUL DESIGN. HE SAID MALAYSIA HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN A MOST IMPORTANT COUNTRY IN AUSTRALIAN STRATEGIC THINKING, SOMETIMES DESCRIBED AS ONE OF PRINCIPAL FORWARD LINES OF DEFENSE. THIS UNDERLINED BY SINGLE FACT THAT MALAYSIA STILL THE COUNTRY OF GREATEST OVERSEAS AUSTRALIAN MILITARY PRESENCE. PARSONS SAID WHITLAM CONSCIOUS THAT HIS OVERTURES TO INDONESIA SINCE ALP ELECTION MIGHT HAVE BEEN CONSTRUED AS NEGLECT OF AN OLD BEST FRIEND SO MALAYSIA GIVEN TOP BILLING THIS TIME. NO RPT NO COMPARABLE POLITICAL INTERPRETATION SHOULD BE APPLIED TO SEQUENCE OF OTHER STOPS, ACCORDING TO HICOM.

3. IN HIS EFFORT TO QUOTE REAFFIRM THE FRIENDSHIP AND STRENGTHEN THE COOPERATION OF TWO DECADES END QUOTE, WHITLAM IDENTIFIED THE GROWING CONVERGENCE OF GOA-MALAYSIAN POLICIES: (A) MUTUAL DEEMPHASIS OF IDEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND MILITARY ALLIANCES IN PREFERENCE FOR TRADE, AND CULTURAL CONTACTS; HE SAID QUOTE WE DO NOT NOW LOOK AT SEA AS BUFFER STATES OR NORTHERN LINE WHERE POTENTIAL FUTURE ENEMY OF AUSTRALIA SHOULD BE HELD. END QUOTE; AND (B) DESIRE TO HEIGHTEN PARTICIPATION IN REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS.

4. WHILE MAKING MUCH OF DIMINISHING DEFENSE RELATIONSHIPS AND THE DESIRE TO TURN AWAY FROM "DESTRUCTIVE CONFRONTATIONS OF THE PAST," WHITLAM APPEARS TO THIS EMBASSY TO HAVE GIVEN FPDA AN UNEXPECTED PAT ON THE HEAD WHEN HE REMARKED AT RAZAK'S BANQUET IN HIS HONOR (AND ALMOST IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE QUOTE IN PARA 3 ABOVE): QUOTE AUSTRALIA'S OWN DEFENSE CAPABILITY IS ENHANCED BY MUTUAL DEFENSE ARRANGEMENTS. MY GOVERNMENT GAVE A PLEDGE TO HONOR THE FULL TERMS OF FPA UNTIL A MORE ENDURING SETTLEMENT IS REACHED IN ESTABLISHING PEACE, FREEDOM AND NEUTRALITY IN THIS REGION. AUSTRALIA AIR FORCE SQUADRONS WILL REMAIN AT BUTTERWORTH AS LONG AS THEY REMAIN RELEVANT TO NEEDS OF BOTH OUR NATIONS AND TO REALITIES OF THE REGION. THIS IS MATTER WHICH, IN CONSULTATION WITH YOUR GOVERNMENT, WE SHALL REVIEW AS APPROPRIATE. END QUOTE.

5. HICOM PARSONS INSISTED THERE WAS NO DIFFERENCE
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BETWEEN THIS STATEMENT AND PREVIOUS REMARKS, INCLUDING DEFMIN BARNARD'S WHICH HAVE SPOKEN OF REVIEW NO LATER THAN MARCH 1975. MOREOVER, PARSONS LATER IN CONVERSATION ADMITTED THAT WHITLAM DELIBERATELY SANITIZED ALL STATEMENTS OF ANY DATES WHICH WOULD STRENGTHEN SO-CALLED TYRANNY OF THE CALENDAR. SAME APPLIED TO WHITLAM'S OPEN-ENDED ENDORSEMENT OF MALAYSIA'S ZONE OF PEACE INITIATIVE. DCM DISCUSSED THIS INTERPRETATION WITH DEP BRIT HICOM SEVERAL

DAYS AGO, AND LATTER CONCURRED THAT HE SENSED IN WHITLAM'S PRESENTATION OF FPDA A MORE POSITIVE RING, NOTWITHSTANDING HICOM'S PROTESTATIONS TO CONTRARY. ALTHOUGH SENIOR MALAYSIAN OFFICIAL TOLD POLOFF FEB 6 THAT GOM FOUND NOTHING NEW IN WHITLAM'S REMARKS ON FPDA, HE SAID MALAYSIAN SIDE WAS SURPRISED THAT WHITLAM EVEN OPENED UP THE SUBJECT AND THAT HE DEVOTED SO MUCH TIME TO IT SINCE GOM HAD NOT INTENDED TO RAISE IT. ZAIN AZRAAI, PM'S FONAFF SECRETARY, CONCURRED FEB 8 THAT WHITLAM'S STATEMENT MORE POSITIVE REGARDING FPDA, BUT ADDED GOM NOT SURPRISED BECAUSE WHITLAM GRADUALLY MOVING THAT DIRECTION SINCE HIS ELECTION. AZRAAI ATTRIBUTES CHANGE TO WHITLAM'S EDUCATION IN POLITICAL REALITIES BY EXPOSURE TO KIRK, LEE KUAN YEW AND INDONESIANS.

6. NOT UNEXPECTEDLY, THE PRINCIPAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHITLAM AND RAZAK WAS THEIR APPROACH TO WHAT WHITLAM DESCRIBED AS QUOTE SOME WIDER REGIONAL ARRANGEMENT FOR INFORMAL CONSULTATION END QUOTE. HICOM REFERRED TO THIS AS AN ASIAN FORUM WITH A SMALL "F" TO DISTINGUISH IT FROM MARCOS' PROPOSAL. HERE TOO WHITLAM SET NO DATES, SPOKE ONLY OF ITS ESTABLISHMENT "IN THE FUTURE" AND COMPARED SUCH A FORUM WITH THE OAS AND OAU WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS EXISTING CONSULTATIVE ORGANIZATIONS THAT IN NO WAY COMPETED WITH TIGHTER REGIONAL GROUPINGS. RAZAK IMPLICITLY VETOED THE WIDER FORUM BY NOT EVEN MENTIONING THE CONCEPT IN HIS OWN PUBLIC REMARKS AND BY CONFINING HIMSELF TO A POSITIVE REAFFIRMATION OF ASEAN. HE REITERATED THAT THERE WAS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR A LOW, CAREFUL, TIME-CONSUMING APPROACH. ASEAN WAS A MODEST, EARNEST, ESSENTIAL STEP AND MALAYSIA'S HOPE FOR THE FUTURE. PARSONS SUGGESTED THAT RAZAK AMPLIFIED THE POINT IN PRIVATE TALKS BY NOTING THAT ASEAN MUST FIRST BUILD ITSELF AROUND THE PRESENT FIVE

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MEMBERS, AND COULD EXPAND ONLY AS CIRCUMSTANCES PERMITTED TO THE OUTER FIVE (INDOCHINA STATES AND BURMA) BEFORE BECOMING A BROADER ORGANIZATION. MFA'S TALALLA CONFIRMED TO POLOFF YESTERDAY THAT A STICKING POINT FOR MALAYSIANS WOULD BE NECESSITY OF INVITING CHINA, WHICH WOULD CERTAINLY BE FOLLOWED BY SOVIET INSISTENCE THAT THEY ALSO BE INCLUDED. STRAITS TIMES EDITORIAL ON JAN 30 SUMMED UP LOCAL THINKING: QUOTE ADMIT THE BEAR AND THE DRAGON AND THE ORGANIZATION WOULD BECOME A FORUM FOR INVECTIVE. END QUOTE.

7. ACCORDING TO PARSONS, OTHER DISCUSSIONS WERE LARGELY AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED:

(A) MALACCA STRAITS. EMPHASIS WAS ON POLLUTION AND SAFETY OF NAVIGATION. RAZAK REPORTEDLY REMARKED

CASUALLY AND OBVIOUSLY FOR THE RECORD THAT THEY WOULD LIKE PRIOR NOTIFICATION OF TRANSIT BY WARSHIPS AND HOPED SUBMARINES WOULD TRAVEL ON SURFACE, BUT HE DID NOT LABOR THE POINT.

(B) JAPAN. RAZAK DID NOT SPEAK OF THE TANAKA VISIT PER SE, BUT RATHER SPOKE MORE GENERALLY OF JAPANESE COMMUNITY'S TENDENCY TO ISOLATE ITSELF IN MALAYSIA. HE REPORTEDLY SAID "THEY WERE THE WORST OF THE EXPATS IN THIS REGARD."

(C) INDOCHINA. RAZAK SAID ONLY THAT GOM WAS KEEPING ITS FINGERS CROSSED.

(D) TRADE. RAZAK WENT ON RECORD IN FAVOR OF REDRESSING GOM'S UNFAVORABLE TRADE BALANCE (APPROX. 1:4) BUT PARSONS SAID AUSTRALIANS RECOGNIZED THIS WAS ALSO FOR THE RECORD BECAUSE MALAYSIANS HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO EXPAND MARKETS IN AUSTRALIA EVEN WITH SOME HELP FROM GOA.

(E) AID. AUSTRALIANS OFFERED TO ASSIST IN SEVERAL SMALL (EAST COAST) PROJECTS WHICH NOT WORTH MENTIONING IN PUBLIC STATEMENTS ESPECIALLY AS WHITLAM DID NOT WISH TO MAKE IT LOOK QUOTE LIKE THAT KIND OF VISIT END QUOTE.

(F) DOMESTIC MALAYSIAN POLITICAL SCENE. IN EVALUATION OF LOCAL INSURGENCIES, WHITLAM TOLD BY CONFIDENTIAL

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MALAYSIANS THAT SARAWAK WOULD BE DECLARED WHITE AREA, I.E. ALL CLEAR, IN ABOUT ONE (SIC) MONTH, WHEREAS PENINSULAR MALAYSIA WAS NO BETTER, NO WORSE.

8. CONCLUSION. IT ALL ADDS UP TO A VERY SUCCESSFUL EVENT. AS THE STRAITS TIMES SAID TODAY, THE AUSTRALIANS AS WELL AS THEIR PRIME MINISTER STAND TALL IN MALAYSIA, BOTH FOR HISTORICAL REASONS AND BECAUSE THE MALAYSIANS FIND THE MAIN LINES OF WHITLAM'S POLICY COMPATIBLE WITH THEIR OWN. NO MATTER WHAT IS SAID OR DONE, THE MALAYSIANS WILL NOT FOR A LONG TIME REALLY REGARD AUSTRALIANS AS PART OF THE ASIAN FAMILY, BUT THEIR CREDENTIALS AS GOOD NEIGHBORS HAVE UNQUESTIONABLY BEEN BURNISHED.
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